



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**AFGHANISTAN**

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

September 16-October 15, 2009

### ECONOMIC GROWTH

#### **Afghanistan Central Business Registry Launched in Mazari Sharif:**

Small and medium businesses are the backbone of economic growth in many countries, including Afghanistan. To enable small businesses to legally register and thrive, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently opened a provincial Central Business Registry Office in Mazari Sharif with the support of USAID. The new office provides businesses with the opportunity to complete all steps of the registration process in one location. Additionally, the new computerized registry system helps to bring Afghanistan's business registration practices up to international standards. It is one more step that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is taking to create a healthy business environment and support Afghan enterprises in the country's provinces.



From left to right, U.S. Ambassador Wayne; Khan Jan Alekozay, Deputy Chairman of ACCI; Minister of Commerce and Industry Shahrani; USAID/Afghanistan Mission Director William M. Frej; and Balkh Governor Noor cut the ribbon to launch the Mazari Sharif branch of the Afghanistan Central Business Registry.

PHOTO: U.S. Mission, Kabul

"We established an efficient ACBR in Kabul and Jalalabad, and now Mazar, and an effective and practical relationship with our private sector customers," said Minister of Commerce and Industry Wahidullah Shahrani. "This service is provided for entrepreneurs forming a business. This process that used to take several days has been reduced to few hours and has resulted in greater transparency, reduced corruption, and increased efficiency." Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor also welcomed the new office and added, "The establishment of the Central Business Registry in Jalalabad will make it easier for those businesses that had to wait up to two weeks or travel to Kabul to register."



U.S. Ambassador Wayne speaks with Deputy Minister of Education Babury and students about life in the National Women's Dormitory.

PHOTO: U.S. Mission, Kabul

### EDUCATION

#### **Dormitory Allows Women to Seek Higher Education:**

Denied an education of any kind under the Taliban, women are now returning to higher education and represent 18 percent of all enrolled university students. The United States supports their endeavors and has reconstructed the National Women's Dormitory at Kabul University to provide a safe home for female students. The dorm provides housing to 1,100 students and is a major deciding factor for many families living in Afghanistan's provinces to allow their daughters to study at a public university in Kabul.



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Recently, Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne, Coordinator for Development and Economic Affairs at U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, attended an Eid-ul-Fitr luncheon at the dormitory to mark the end of Ramadan. Accompanied by Dr. M. Osman Babury, Deputy Minister of Higher Education for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Amanullah Hamidzai, Chancellor of Kabul Education University, Ambassador Wayne toured the women's dormitory and met with residents. Several were about to graduate and said they were looking forward to working as teachers and translators once they returned to their provinces.

"I am honored to be at the Women's Dormitory for this special celebration," Ambassador Wayne said. "It is truly wonderful to meet all of the students – who are the future of Afghanistan. The U.S. Government looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Government of Afghanistan as it seeks to increase higher education for all of its citizens."

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**New National Electricity Corporation Brings Better Service:** On September 30, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan established the new national electricity corporation, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS). DABS is owned by the Government of Afghanistan, but will introduce private-sector practices into its business operations, such as setting new salary rates for employees and more efficient billing and collection practices. This critical step will lead to improved electrical services for the Afghan people.

The United States, the World Bank and other international donors have worked closely with Afghanistan's government to establish DABS, which will further increase the amounts of electricity available for Afghans' houses and businesses. The U.S. Government, through USAID, has invested \$4 million in DABS to date and pledged another \$40 million over the next two years as part of its overall \$1.7 billion energy sector program in Afghanistan. Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy summarized the occasion by saying, "The creation of this new electrical utility corporation demonstrates the Afghan Government's continued commitment to provide electricity, an essential public service, in a way that will improve the lives and prosperity of the people of this great country."



U.S. Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne (seated, second from right) joined Afghan officials (from left to right: Minister of Urban Development Pashtun, Minister of Economy Shams, Minister of Energy and Water Khan and Minister of Finance Zakhilwal), and international donors to announce the Afghan Government's launch of a new utility corporation.

PHOTO: U.S. Mission, Kabul



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### AGRICULTURE

#### **Women-owned Dairy Processing Centers Create Economic Opportunities:**

The U.S. Government is committed to creating economic opportunities for women, and building their skills so that they can support themselves and their families. Over the past few years, the USG has helped women open and operate dairy processing centers to make and sell cheese. In the eastern region of Afghanistan, seven women-owned *Spinghar Cheese Processing Centers* are now self-sustainable, and are no longer receiving any financial assistance.

The United States continues to support these women entrepreneurs through training and marketing assistance. Technical support ensures clean cheese-making procedures and the continued sustainability of the centers. In the last two weeks of August 2009, 250 kg of cheese was marketed in eastern Afghanistan. USAID is also helping 20 women establish two new cheese-processing centers in Nangarhar province.



A woman weighs cheese at a Spinghar Cheese Processing Center.

PHOTO: USAID/IDEA-NEW

### DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

#### **Government Media and Information Center Increases Access to Information:**

Citizens' access to information is essential to a functioning democracy. The Government Media and Information Center (GMIC) was founded as an Afghan-led entity to oversee strategic communications between the government, Afghan citizens, and the international community. The center and its professional staff now provide timely, accurate, and credible information that bolsters public confidence in the government.

Recently, officials have used the GMIC to communicate several essential messages to the Afghan people. Most importantly, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Counternarcotics briefed the media on a survey of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and announced that 20 of Afghanistan's provinces are poppy-free. The GMIC also provides facilities for media training and roundtables on current issues, bolstering the quality of reporting in Afghanistan.



Minister of Energy and Water Mohammad Ismail Khan briefs the media at the Government Media and Information Center.

PHOTO: Government Media and Information Center